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PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS

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TUBERCULOSIS IS A CURABLE AND PREVENTABLE DISEASE

In all countries where active tuberculosis programmes are being carried on, the death rate from this disease is falling. During the past five years in Saskatchewan there has been a reduction of 25 per cent in the tuberculosis death rate. Nevertheless tuberculosis is still public enemy number one during the first thirty years of life. In childhood and young adult life tuberculosis causes more than one-third of all deaths from contagious diseases. In fact, it is still by far the most fatal of all infectious diseases.

Almost 300 people die from tuberculosis each year, indicating the seriousness of the disease. It is usually one of the more chronic types of the communicable diseases, and for this reason a person may be affected for some little time before many symptoms appear, thus allowing it to get a fairly good start before much notice may be taken of it. Children exposed to the disease are especially susceptible.

How Infection Is Spread:

The tubercle bacilli which is found in the sputum of many lung cases is the cause of tuberculosis. This germ is spread chiefly by patients coughing, sneezing and spitting.

Infection is contracted largely by contact, either directly or indirectly, with persons suffering from tuberculosis. It may also be spread by contaminated objects—food, hands, etc.

The bovine type of tuberculosis is just as serious as the human type but much less common. It is contracted by drinking milk from cows that are infected with tuberculosis. The bovine type develops in children, affecting the glands, bones and abdomen. Where cattle are tested for tuberculosis and reactors eliminated, or where pasteurized milk is used the danger from bovine tuberculosis is eliminated.

The infection among school children and young adults has been reduced to one-third of what it was fourteen years ago. At present about 12 per cent. of our school children and 18 per cent. of the young adult group give a positive test for infection from this disease.

How the Disease Develops:

Pulmonary tuberculosis is usually, but not always, insidious in its development. Pain in the chest or pleurisy, a slight cough, or slight afternoon fever with gradual loss of weight or strength, are often the only symptoms noticed. Ill health or anything that lowers a person's vitality, such as over-tiredness or excesses of any kind, may be the causes assisting tuberculosis infection to become active. Frequent colds, measles, whooping cough and other communicable diseases, or pneumonia, by impairing the general health, may be followed by tuberculosis.

Occasionally healthy people who have been in close contact with careless persons suffering from tuberculosis may break down simply because they have received large doses of infection.

How Tuberculosis Can Be Prevented :

1. Life comes from life, wheat from wheat, tares from tares, and tuberculosis from tuberculosis. Where there is no infection there can be no tuberculosis. Consequently, whenever a person who spreads this disease is removed from a home or a community and treated in an institution until he is well, others in that home or community are prevented from getting tuberculosis.
2. Good health prevents small infections from developing into disease. When mingling with the public, prevention of this disease resolves itself into proper measures of personal hygiene. Good, plain, substantial food, plenty of fresh air and sunshine, and regular habits of life are essential to the maintenance of one's regular health at the highest level possible. Irregular habits of living, loss of sleep and excesses of all kinds, tend to lower the resistance we have to this or any other disease.
3. Should symptoms of this disease develop, safety lies in the early discovery of the disease. Tuberculosis in the early stages is very curable. 80 per cent of treated early cases return to their former employment. In the late stages tuberculosis is very serious; few can be cured; others can be arrested for a time; in many cases the inevitable result is fatal.

If you suspect that you have symptoms of tuberculosis, consult your family doctor without delay. If your doctor finds that you have tuberculosis, ask him to arrange for your admission to the sanatorium for treatment. If your doctor is not sure, but suspects that you have tuberculosis, he will refer you to a sanatorium or clinic of the Anti-Tuberculosis League for further examination.

Suggestions for Controlling the Spread of Tuberculosis :

1. People should not sneeze or cough without placing a handkerchief or a piece of gauze over the nose and mouth. This prevents droplet infection.
2. Persons should not spit on the floor or in public places.
3. Sputum should be received in cloths, gauze, or paper cups which can be burned.
4. Dishes, knives, forks, spoons, etc., used by patients should be kept separate, and should be sterilized by boiling after they are used.
5. Bed linen used by patients should be boiled or disinfected before washing.
6. Young children should not be cared for by tuberculous persons. Kissing and fondling should be avoided.
7. Tuberculous persons should sleep alone.

8. Always wash your hands before eating.
9. If you live in the country have your cows tested for tuberculosis. If you live in a city or large town drink only pasteurized milk.
10. If you have been exposed to tuberculosis have a regular medical examination to be sure you have not become infected. This examination should be repeated once a year for several years. All contacts to active cases are examined free of charge in Saskatchewan by the Anti-Tuberculosis League.
11. Cleanliness by washing down the walls, the floors and furniture in a patient's room with soap and hot water, combined with the foregoing precautions and clean personal habits will prevent infection. If proper precautions are observed, an intelligent person who has had treatment for tuberculosis is not a source of danger to others living in the same home.

Treatment:

In Saskatchewan treatment for tuberculosis in sanatoria is free to the sick. The most up-to-date scientific treatment known, both medical and surgical is available at the three sanatoria. These sanatoria are located at Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

By consulting your family doctor for a yearly medical examination, tuberculosis or any other disease undermining your health will be detected.

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